



**SPECIAL MEETING OF THE COMMON COUNCIL  
MIDDLETOWN CONNECTICUT  
SEPTEMBER 23, 2014**

**Special Meeting**

The Special Meeting of the Common Council was held in the Council Chamber in the Municipal Building on Tuesday, September 23, 2014 at 6 p.m.

**Present**

Mayor Daniel T. Drew, Deputy Mayor Robert P. Santangelo, Councilwoman Mary A. Bartolotta, Councilwoman Hope P. Kasper, Councilman Grady L. Faulkner, Jr., Councilman Carl R. Chisem, Councilman Gerald E. Daley, Councilman James B. Streeto, Councilman Sebastian N. Giuliano, Councilwoman Sandra Russo Driska, Councilman David Bauer; and Common Council Clerk Marie O. Norwood.

**Absent**

Corporation Counsel Daniel Ryan and Council Members Councilman Thomas J. Serra.

**Also Present**

State of Connecticut Department of Transportation Members Timothy M. Wilson, Manager of the Highway Design, William W. Britnell, Principal Engineer, David W. Harms, Project Manager, Erik A. Jarboe, Project Engineer, and Manny D. Pires, Design Engineer

**1. Mayor calls meeting to order at 6 p.m.**

**(Pledge of Allegiance)**

**(Council Clerk Reads the Call of the Meeting and Mayor declares call a legal call and meeting a legal meeting.)**

**2. Workshop Opens**

The Chair states this is an informal workshop and will not do the call. The DOT is here to discuss the plans for possible reconfiguration of Rt. 17; from 6 to 6:30 they will answer questions from the Council and at 6:30, from the public. He thanks everyone for being here. The DOT has been fabulous to work with and in sharing plans and the plans are not fixed and they are here to inform us and hear from the public and community. He turns it over to members of the DOT present. They are Timothy M. Wilson, Manager of the Highway Design, William W. Britnell, Principal Engineer, David W. Harms, Project Manager, Erik A. Jarboe, Project Engineer, and Manny D. Pires, Design Engineer. Started at 6 p.m. Mr. Britnell states this is a conceptual plan of the Rte. 17 interchange. We are here to talk to the Council and at 6:30 there is an open house for the public and 7 p.m. a formal presentation. This is to discuss the concept plan. Mr. Jarboe takes the Council through the PowerPoint presentation. It is Rte. 17 on Ramp on Rte. 9. They are discussing safety concerns of this on ramp. The crash experience from 2010 to 2012, there were 375 accidents and it is number 2 of high frequency crash locations. Proposed solution is remove the stop sign and provide acceleration length and reconfigure the weave of the on ramp. He shows the proposed improvements. It will mean widening the bridge over the street. The second part is widening the highway to accommodate the acceleration lane. They will propose cleaning up the lanes with two lanes to the northbound on ramp and one lane to head south. The idea is to pull all the traffic on route 9 weave and stay in the left most lane onto the acceleration lane. With the proposed improvements, you can see the intersection of Union, River Rd and Harbor Drive will be under the bridge and it doesn't function very well. By widening the bridge, it doesn't make it better and causes problems at the intersection, so they are suggesting to move the intersection beyond Sumner

Creek and it would clean up the intersection and operate more efficiently. The acceleration lane is not required, but is an opportunity to turn Harbor Drive into a cul de sac road. If they did a cul de sac, he shows the type of roadway it could become. It would become a local access road. They are working close with the City and Riverfront Development Committee and they suggested the idea and there seemed to be support for it and there are concerns where the traffic would go. They did traffic analysis and there are about 500 cars at peak hours using the Harbor Drive on ramp. A typical one is 1,500, so this is a small volume of traffic. They looked at the existing route at the intersection of Union and DeKoven and they get right on to Rte. 9 north, and if closed, there are a few paths they could take to get to the on ramp. They noticed that some using the on ramp are bypassing this entrance to avoid the stop sign and a potential accident. We looked at the existing intersections and found three would benefit from some work from the increased traffic. At Cooley Avenue, there is not a huge problem; however the City indicated there is a potential problem because of Hospital Parking and this intersection would benefit from a signal and they included it. The other location is the on and off ramps for Route 17; they will put a signal at the two intersections with the on and off ramps. We worked closely with the City and Riverfront Development and there are details to work out and there are opportunities to work them out for the best interests of the City and the users of the highway. He discusses new sidewalks in the area. We considered a pedestrian bridge crossing Sumner Creek and they could do a nice bridge. It might lend better to a future trail; there is an area of a possible Rain Garden. There is a big area where the bridge is wide to accommodate the rail and there is an area to do something there to do some plantings. We thought about cleaning up the underside of the bridge to add lighting and cleaning up the bridge so they have nicer rails in a visually sensitive area. It would transform the roadway and we can offer options like on street parking and a mid-walk crossing which would not be put on an on ramp. There is quite a bit of pedestrian friendly amenities. If this would move into design phase, the majority of the work will be done by them, but they have to acquire property along the riverfront. There will be detours and the estimated cost is between \$20 - \$25 million. Right now it is a concept review; we wanted to meet with the City, key stakeholders and meet with the public; if supported they could do a preliminary design phase in 2015. They would meet again with the three groups and then would move forward with federal approval of the design. Construction would begin in 2018. To summarize, this is trying to address a safety problem and to do some other things that are community friendly. That is an option. It is not something we have to do, remove the on ramp at Harbor Drive. We think it provides a lot of improvements and we are open to other improvements. We have met with the restaurant owner. We have not heard any major objections. The Chair states at 6:30 they will open to the public and you have 10 minutes to ask questions.

Councilman Daley states you don't have to remove the Harbor Park on ramp. Mr. Britnell responds, no we can put in the acceleration lane and stop before that on ramp. From an engineering point of view we would like to take it out. Councilman Daley states that is a change; I was chair of the committee and we met with DOT last year and the people at the meeting told us we can't have it there because the acceleration lane would be too close in proximity and you have the light. Mr. Jarboe states he was not at that meeting. Mr. Britnell states he I doesn't want to misrepresent it; we would like to take it out, but we physically don't have to. Councilman Daley states it will be more divided. Mr. Britnell states if we don't take it out, the amenities on Harbor Drive cannot be done because it is an on ramp. Councilman Daley states what do you need from the City to demonstrate support. Mr. Britnell responds we are looking at the Mayor and if he is in support of it then we would do it.

#### **Noted for the Record**

Councilwoman Bartolotta takes her seat in the chamber at 6:21 p.m.

Councilman Faulkner states he is happy to hear the last comments. The traffic analysis, I am not sure it captures where we are going with downtown and we have all this optimism and the path might be different from what we looked at;

have you sat with the police department if there are events down there. Mr. Britnell replies they have not spoken about events but the growth, we do have some growth in the traffic projections and it will account for some of the numbers. They do take into account the area available for development and there is some sense of growth in the projections. If the on ramp was closed, there has to be redirection of traffic. There would be signage. Councilman Faulkner states if there are events there, they park all along in the area. Councilman Bauer the connector from South Main Street and Rte. 9 have you entertained scenarios to take it to ground level. Mr. Britnell replies yes, but we couldn't get it to work. Councilman Streeto states he knows it doesn't address the lights; would it make it easier or harder. Mr. Britnell replies about the same. Councilman Giuliano asks closing Harbor Drive entrance ramp does that mean that Harbor Drive has to remain or can we add it to the riverfront campus where the Canoe Club is and reconfigure that whole area. Mr. Britnell states that is a viable question. One of the benefits is for on-street parking, but it is an option. Councilwoman Kasper asks what the closest intersection is. Mr. Britnell responds it would be Union Street. Councilwoman Kasper to leave Harbor Drive, you only have Union Street in and out of the area. Mr. Britnell replies yes. Councilman Faulkner when you sited the safety statistics, how does it compare to the other end of Rte. 9, the entrance into Bridge and Miller Street. Mr. Jarboe states he did not compare the two. Mr. Britnell states this location is #2 of high accidents and the other location is not #1 and he is not sure it is even on the list and from accidents this is worse. Councilwoman Bartolotta asks about the amount of accidents, what do you see for the future the amount of accidents. Mr. Britnell responds it was roughly 375 accidents and almost all of those are rear-end accidents and they would go away and Rte. 9 is congested and some may occur on Rte. 9, but most would go away. The Mayor opens questions from the public to dot and thanks everyone for being here tonight.closes at 6:30

**3. Workshop Closes.**

The Chair closes the workshop and states the DOT will open this time to questions from the public.

**4. Meeting adjourned.**

The Chair closes the Common Council portion of the meeting at 6:30 p.m.

ATTEST:

MARIE O. NORWOOD  
COMMON COUNCIL CLERK